DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 103 957 EA 006 877

AUTHOR Blumberg, Arthur; And Others
TITLE The Substance of Trust Between Teachers and Principals.
PUB DATE Apr 75
NOTE 21p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (60th, Washington, D.C., March 31-April 4, 1975)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.76 HC-$1.58 PLUS POSTAGE
DESCRIPTORS *Credibility; Definitions; Elementary Secondary Education; *Interpersonal Relationship; *Occupational Surveys; Personal Values; Principals; *Statistical Analysis; Statistical Data; *Teacher Administrator Relationship; Teacher Attitudes; Teacher Characteristics

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to clarify the meaning of "trust" as it applies to relationships between teachers and principals. First, 85 teachers were asked to explain the meaning of the statement, "I trust my principal"; a modified Q-sort of these data yielded 10 dimensions of trust. Then, 145 respondents were asked to indicate which of the 10 dimensions they felt was most important. Various demographic data were also collected from these respondents. The 10 dimensions of trust were then rank ordered on the basis of the teachers' responses, and a responses, and a chi-square test was used to correlate differences in rankings with selected demographic variables. Results of the analysis indicate differences in the importance of the various dimensions of trust. These differences depend on the sex of the teacher as compared to the sex of the principal. (Author/JG)

25.10

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH EDUCATION & WELFARE NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

SCOPE OF INTEREST NOTICE
The ERIC Facility has assigned this document for processing to: EA SP
In our judgement, this document is also of interest to the clearinghouses noted to the right. Indexing should reflect their special points of view.

THE SUBSTANCE OF TRUST BETWEEN TEACHERS AND PRINCIPALS[1]

by

Arthur Blumberg, William D. Greenfield, Jr., and David Nason

Syracuse University

ED103957

EA 006 877

Introduction

This study was begun out of a concern over the clarity of the concept "trust". Though the word is used daily in almost every conceivable context to describe a supposed positive quality of a situation or a relationship, its precise meaning seems rarely to be made explicit. It is as if one would magically know, from the term itself, what it is intended to communicate. An initial search of the literature confirmed our hunch that little attention has been given to the "substance of trust".

The study reported here had two primary objectives. The first was conceptual: Could our research help to make trust less of an ill-defined concept by explicating more precise meanings that are attributed to it by people. Second, because we were interested in the schools, we wanted to be able to describe more accurately what teachers mean when they think about trusting their principal. Related to this second objective, it was the purpose of the study

---

[1]Prepared for presentation at the 1975 Convention of the American Educational Research Association, Washington, D. C.

to test whether or not the type of trust held by teachers to be most salient in their relationship with their principal was a function of (1) sex of the teacher, (2) sex of the principal, or (3) the type of school, elementary or secondary.

Theoretical Perspective

Probably as a result of the human relations movement, the human potential movement, and the recent and ongoing political and social ferment in which American society is involved, the word trust is being bandied about as never before. However, all the usage notwithstanding, it becomes evident even to the casual observer that meanings attributed to the concept are vague and ill-defined. The literature does not carry one's understanding very far.

In Gibb's (1964) article, "Climate for Trust Formation," for example, one is left wondering precisely what the nature of the trust is that he has in mind --- inferences abound. As he talks about the acceptance of self in a group, Gibb (p. 279) writes that "Serving as a block to such acceptance are the defensive feelings of fear and distrust...." Defense-inductive climates are seen as correlated with the reduction of fear and distrust. But the substance or meaning of trust or distrust is left unspecified. One can infer that it would be some sort of openness to self and others, perhaps that kind of openness (still not conceptualized well) that comes with personal security with self, a sense of one's potency, and so forth.

Zand's work (1973) relates to Gibb's and is much more specific. His focus is on trusting behavior and clearly implies interpersonal openness (again not defined) and vulnerability (Golembiewski, 1972). Trusting behavior is described by Zand (p. 555) as those actions that "...(a) increase one's vulnerability, (b) to a person whose behavior is not under our control, (c) in a situation in which the penalty (disutility) one suffers if the other abuses that vulnerability is greater than the benefit (utility) one gains if other does not abuse that vulnerability." Implicit in this concept of trusting behavior is the element of predictability. As one takes action that increases his vulnerability to another, he engages in a prediction --- he calculates the odds --- concerning the potential costs and benefits of making himself vulnerable.

Sophisticated though Zand's work is, the more precise meaning of trust remains to be understood. This remaining ambiguity concerning the substantive meaning of the concept of trust provided the point of departure for this study.

Methods

The initial thrust of the study focussed on gathering data which would help clarify the meaning that trust had for teachers as they viewed their relationships with their principal. Eighty-five teachers were administered an open-ended instrument which asked them to respond, in writing, to the meaning the statement "I trust my principal" had for them. The respondents identities remained anonymous. Their

responses (a total of 179) were then transfered to index cards in order to develop categories by means of a Q-sort. This procedure resulted in the identification of ten separate categories or meanings that teachers put on the trust relationship between themselves and their principal.

A questionaire was then constructed in which the meaning of each of the ten substantive dimensions of trust was described. One hundred forty-one respondents were asked to indicate the dimension that they felt was most necessary to the maintenance of a satisfactory relationship with their principal. Appropriate demographic data were also collected. Data were analyzed by Chi-square.

Results

The Q-sort yielded ten predominant meanings that teachers gave to the statement "I trust my principal." These meanings we refer to as the dimensions or substance of trust between teachers and principal. Each dimension is preceded by a stem implying predictability. For example, some teachers indicated that for them "I trust my principal" meant they could count on the principal to be personally warm. The dimensions are defined briefly as follows:

Personal Warmth -- communication of warmth and caring for teachers.

Fairness -- is impartial and objective in dealings with staff.

Interpersonal Openness -- shares ideas and feelings with the staff and encourages them to do the same.

Professional Openness - is easily approachable by the staff for assistance with professional problems.

Technical Competence -- performs the role of principal in a technically competent manner.

Confidentiality - keeps those things teachers share with him in confidence.

Follow-through -- does what he says he will do.

Credibility - communicates in a straight forward manner without hidden meanings.

Participative Decision-making -- shares decision-making with the staff.

Support -- backs up his faculty in confrontation with children, parents, and the school bureaucracy.

No scale of value is attached to the order in which these ten dimensions have been listed.

When the ten dimensions were rank ordered by teachers relative to their importance to the maintenance of satisfactory relations with their principal, the ordering was: (1) Credibility, (2) Support, (3) Fairness, (4) Participative Decision-making, (5) Professional Openness, (6) Interpersonal Openness, (7) Technical Competence, (8) Personal Warmth, (9) Follow-through, and (10) Confidentiality.

By content analysis, the ten dimensions seemed to collapse into factors associated with:

a. Personality of the Principal - personally warm;

b. Interpersonal Style of the Principal - interpersonally open;

c. Professional Expectations Held by Teachers - fairness, professionally open, maintains confidences, supportive, credible;

d. Administrative Expectations by Teachers -- technical competence, shares in decision-making, and follows through on decisions.

While the distinction between professional and administrative expectations is not clear, it appeared that "professional expectations" referred to the role demands placed on principals relative to the way teachers expect to be treated as a professional person. "Administrative expectations" referred to the role demands placed on principals for organization leadership and management.

Chi-square tests were performed on the data which had been sorted on the basis of (1) the sex of the teacher, (2) sex of the principal, (3) whether or not the respondents worked in elementary or secondary schools, and (4) relating sex of respondents with sex of the principal. Tables 1, 2, and 3 present the results.

Tables 1, 2, and 3 show the results of Chi-square tests when the saliency data were arranged according to sex of teacher, sex of principal, and sex of teachers matched with sex of principal.

Though Table 1 indicates $p = .08$ relative to differences in saliency of trust substance between male and female teachers, it was felt that this result was worthy of discussion. The widest areas of difference appear between male and female teachers on matters of technical competence, professional openness, fairness, and support. Men seemed to consider professional openness and support important to them out of proportion to women. On the other hand, women teachers felt more strongly about technical competence and fairness than did the men.

Table 1

Association between Sex of Teacher and Saliency of Trust Substance

	Male	Female
Confidentiality	0%	4.4%
Interpersonal Openness	11.6	7.8
Personal Warmth	5.8	3.3
Participative Decision-Making	13.0	8.9
Follow-Through	2.9	2.2
Technical Competence	4.3	12.2
Professional Openness	13.0	7.8
Fairness	7.2	20.0
Support	20.3	11.1
Credibility	21.7	22.2

Male, N= 69
Female, N=90

df = 9
x^2 = 15.31
p = .08

Table 2

Association between Sex of Principal and Saliency of Trust Substance

	Male	Female
Confidentiality	1.6%	6.5%
Interpersonal Openness	11.8	0
Personal Warmth	3.1	9.7
Participative Decision-Making	11.0	9.7
Follow-Through	3.1	0
Technical Competence	9.4	6.5
Professional Openness	9.4	12.9
Fairness	11.0	29.0
Support	16.5	9.7
Credibility	22.8	16.1

Male, N= 127
Female, N=31

df = 9
x^2 = 16.81
p = .05

Table 3

Association between Sex of Teacher Related to Sex of Principal and Saliency of Trust Substance

	Male Teacher, Male Principal	Female Teacher, Male Principal	Female Teacher Female Principal
Confidentiality	0%	3.2%	7.4%
Interpersonal Openness	12.5	11.1	0.0
Personal Warmth	4.7	1.6	7.4
Participative Decision-Making	12.5	9.5	7.4
Follow-Through	3.1	3.2	0
Technical Competence	4.7	14.3	7.4
Professional Openness	14.1	4.8	14.8
Fairness	7.8	14.3	33.3
Support	18.8	14.3	3.7
Credibility	21.9	23.8	18.5

Male Teacher, Male Principal, N= 64
Female Teacher, Male Principal, N= 63
Female Teacher, Female Principal, N= 27

df = 18
x^2 = 28.76
p = .05

Table 2 presents the results of the Chi-square analysis when the data were sorted on the basis of the sex of the principal who was used as a reference point by the respondents. The Chi-square value was significant at the .05 level of probability. The results suggest that when male principals are the reference point more emphasis is placed by teachers on trust as it relates to interpersonal openness, support, and credibility than is the case with female principals. With women principals, matters of confidentiality, personal warmth, and fairness seem to assume more importance.

The results of the Chi-square analysis when sex of the teacher was matched with sex of the principal are shown in Table 3.[2] We focus on what appear to be some obvious differences in the match-ups.

- Confidentiality. Female teachers place more importance on this dimension of trust when they are matched with female principals than does either sex when matched with a male principal.

- Interpersonal Openness. Both sexes emphasize this trust dimension when they are matched with a male principal than when women teachers are matched with women principals.

- Professional Openness. When female teachers react to male principals, professional openness assumes less importance

---

[2]The category of male teacher - female principal is missing, simply because there were too few respondents who met this match in our sample for analysis.

than when the match is with female principals or when male teachers use male principals as a reference point.

·Fairness. Reference to Tables 1 and 2 indicates that fairness seems to be a salient issue of trust for female teachers and when the principal under consideration is female. Table 3 reinforces this point. When female teachers are matched with female principals the differences become more pronounced. One third of the Female Teachers with Female Principals sample emphasized this condition.

·Support. The question of support becomes most pronounced in the condition Male Teacher--Male Principal. The association also seems to be fairly strong in Female Teachers--Male Principal, but much less so with Female Teacher--Female Principal.

When a Chi-square analysis was performed to test the association between the dimensions of trust and the type school (elementary or secondary) in which teachers worked no significant or nearly significant difference ($p < .67$) developed.

Discussion

We approach the discussion of results from two perspectives: (1) a limited one that focusses on the specifics of this study, and (2) a wide-ranging one that poses several frameworks for future research.

Narrowly, though significant differences occured in the analysis, the interpretation of these differences presents some difficulties. There is little theory that can serve as a guide outside of general assumptions, possibly biased, that relate to sex differences. Apparently, the lack of theory notwithstanding,

sex differences whatever their derivation do seem to be operative.

A few possible interpretations are presented within the framework. Being able to count on the technical competence and fairness of their principal (Table 1) seems to be more important to women than to men. This may be an artifact of the condition of women at work, suggesting the possibility of culturally induced dependency needs and fears of not being fairly treated relative to men. By the same token, the fact that male teachers seem to need to be able to predict more than females that their principal will support them may be reflective of the cultural stereotype of men as decision-makers and risk-takers.

Table 2 suggests the possible operation of additional cultural stereotypes related to sex. For example, the teachers in this study placed more importance on interpersonal openness with male principals than female and, conversely, more importance on fairness with female principals than male. The questions then arise, Are men stereotypically seen as more closed than women, and women more apt to show favorites than men? It is obvious that both of these questions imply cultural bias.

Because the issue dealt with in Table 3 is suggestive of problems involving interpersonal relationships interpretation becomes more complex. However, some reinforcing possibilities of the above discussion seem evident. For example, does the female teacher -- female principal emphasis on confidentiality reflect the

"gossipy" prejudice directed toward women? Does the relatively low priority women place on professional openness with men principals suggest their reluctance to engage in professional risk-taking with men?

Obviously, we are standing on shaky theoretical and empirical ground. But it may be precisely that sort of ground that is necessary in order to generate further research.

In a somewhat different interpretive thrust, we were struck by the "hygienic" character of the substances of trust that were identified in the initial phase of this study. It seems that, following the paradigm developed by Herzberg (1959), most of the substance of trust in the relation between teachers and their principal is concerned with the conditions and environment of work rather than upon the work itself. The focus was upon dissatisfiers rather than upon satisfiers. Of the eleven dissatisfiers noted by Herzberg, three seem to capture the tenor of the teacher trust dimensions:

Interpersonal Relations (superiors)

- Personal Warmth
- Interpersonal openness
- Fairness
- Confidentiality

Supervision - technical

- Technical Competence
- Follow-through
- Professional Openness
- Credibility

Company Policy and Administration

- Participative Decision-making
- Support

In a more recent but related study by Sergiovanni (1967), it was found that a "fairness-unfairness" discriminator was a dominant factor in distinguishing the frequency with which second-level factors appeared in high attitude sequences as contrasted with low attitude sequences. Unfairness was reported as the dominant factor (32 per cent) among the low attitude sequences; the contrasts with zero (0) per cent on the fairness dimension among the high attitude sequences. This difference between highs and lows was reported as significant at the .001 level. In the current study, it's interesting to note that the dimension of "fairness" was ranked by teachers as a very close third in importance relative to the dimension of trust that was most necessary in order for them to maintain satisfactory relations with their principal.

In the broader perspective we are led much beyond Gibb's (1964) notion of a trusting climate and Zand's (1973) ideas of trusting behavior. That is, our focus is on the development of potential research frameworks which would provide further clarification of the substance of this phenomenon which receives so much attention in today's world. From our work several potential frameworks "became apparent."

The Situation-Specific Framework

The first of these has to do with the seemingly situationally specific character of the substance of trust between teachers and principals. Again, the data is incomplete. However, through informal conversations with teachers and administrators it became

apparent that the particular dimension or cluster of substantive dimensions identified as most salient by teachers might vary systematically according to several factors:

a. context of the situation -- is it ambiguous or highly structured, transient or permanent, long-term or short term, and the like?

b. function of the teacher -- what's the nature of the teacher's job, specialization, responsibility for children as opposed to adults?

c. issue on the agenda -- is the focus upon substantive issues or upon emotional issues?

Another related set of situational variables seemed more descriptive of the type of organizational situation rather than the situation of the individual teacher, although it is likely that these do overlap and interact. This related set of "situational" variables are:

a. degree of bureaucratization -- is the situation highly structured or is it relatively ambiguous?

b. size of the organization -- this would involve not only number of staff members but also the size and spread of the physical plant itself;

Taking these "situational" variables into consideration led us to the formulation of a matrix wherein the substantive dimensions of trust could be juxtaposed to the situational variables.

It would not seem difficult to begin to develop testable propositions on the basis of the set of interrelated variables noted below.

	Context of Situation	Function of Teacher	Content of Issue	Degree of Bur-eaucratization	Size of the Organization
Personal Warmth					
Fairness					
Interpersonal Openness					
Professional Openness					
Confidentiality					
Technical Competence					
Follow-through					
Credibility					
Participative Decision-Making					
Support					

The Personality Framework

A second take-off point that might provide additional clarification of the incidence and salience of particular substantive dimensions related to individual factors associated with specific teachers. These "idiosyncratic" factors might be either attitudinal sets, personality traits, vocational interests, and the like. Again, a multi-variable matrix can be built where-in these variables are juxtaposed with the ten dimensions of trust. Predictions about the frequency of relations could then be tested.

The Cross Organizational Framework

A third framework for research ranges beyond the specific occupational area of teaching to speculations about differences occuring across and within various organizational configurations. Yet another matrix might be developed interrelating the substance of trust to general category of organizational function (normative, coercive, utilitarian), voluntary or involuntary membership categories, professional, semi-professional, and non-professional types of organizations.

The Organizational Role Framework

A fourth design which is guiding our current research thrust, has to do with speculation about the nature and position of the actors in the situation; peer, subordinate, and superordinate. For example, would different dimensions of "substance" be identified with a shift in focus from subordinate-superior to a focus on peer-peer, or superior-subordinate? A lower-order notion that seems related to this set of variables might be termed the "interference factor". This was proposed to be related to a "congruency of expectations" phenomena where-in persons holding similar positions, attitudinal sets, jobs, and so forth, would have somewhat more similarly aligned sets of expectations for one another and hence would be likely to encounter less "perceptual interference" in their relations with one another, hence less "garbage" to interfere in the establishment and maintenance of trust. The organizational role framework (specifically for public school organizations) may be viewed through the following matrix.

	Organizational Administrator (Principals)	Professional Members (Teachers)	Organizational Clients (Students)
Organizational Administrator			
Professional			
Clients			

The matrix, of course, directly confronts issues of power as they relate to the substance of trust. It was felt that the terms administrator, professional, and client would capture the essence of the superior, subordinate, peer variables without being restrictive to public school organizations; the foregoing might well include hospitals, medical and nursing schools, university and college situations, public school situations, and other "professional" types of work groups and settings.

The Climate Framework

A fifth category of speculation centered upon the relation between the ten dimensions of trust and the climate of organizations and the style of organizational heads. Again, a whole range of variables might be easily juxtaposed and hypotheses formulated and tested.

In concluding this brief discussion of where this study led us, several additional observations seem warranted. These do not appear to be specifically related to the substantive aspects of trust and

nence will be treated more generally. At a conceptual level they are more on the order of the variables of predictability and vulnerability discussed by Zand, Deutsch, Gibb, and others. These variables are as follows:

1. Time

   a. Frequency of interaction and observation opportunities are likely related to the "magnitude" of trust.

   b. Length of time spent interacting in or around issues related to particular substantive issues probably is related to what substantive dimensions of trust are identified as more or less salient.

   c. Pattern of previous interactions (historical perspective) is probably related to and conditions the development of substantive trust.

2. Environment

   a. Stability or instability of the organizational or interaction setting probably conditions the substance of trust which is identified as more or less salient.

   b. High and low stress relative to the felt-pressures of one person probably conditions the substance of trust which evolves from the interaction.

3. Interpersonal Style

   a. It probably makes a difference, relative to what substance of trust is identified, if the individuals in the encounter are prone to direct or indirect interpersonal styles.

These additional factors evolving out of a focus upon variables related to time, environment, and interpersonal style seem relevant to clarification and further elaboration of the more general "anatomy" of trust, moving beyond "substance".

Significance

Though this study was exploratory and even somewhat tentative in its initial phases, the results seem to have several scientific and educational implications. For example:

1. Some start has been made on clarifying the substance of the concept of trust as it applies to teacher-principal relationships.
2. It seems quite probable that the substance of trust is situation specific, and that further research is needed to clarify the concept in other organizational contexts, and to relate the concept to other organizational variables.
3. It will be important to learn the effects on teachers and school organizations when teacher expectations concerning their trust relationships with the principal are not met.
4. The study enables us to pose more specific questions for research. For example:
   a. Do particular principal behavior styles have the effect of emphasizing particular trust relationships in a school?
   b. Does the relative amount of power that teachers have over school life relative to the principal affect their perceptions of teacher-principal trust?
   c. Does the psychological character of the teacher's membership in the faculty group relate to the way the teacher defines the substance of the trust relationship held with the principal?

Conceptually, then, the study would appear to open up an as yet untapped facet of school organizational life.

A second order of significance relates to diagnostic potential of the instrumentation reflecting the ten substantive elements of trust in the relation between teachers and their principal. If, indeed, the dissatisfying "hygienic" factors are blocking or somehow consuming human energies which might otherwise be focused on work itself --- the education of children --- then the identification of

factors contributing to teacher dissatisfaction would appear requisite to the diagnosis and remediation of their cause. It is not suggested that the mere removal of these "dissatisfiers" evolving out of the substantive dimension of trust will in and of itself result in more satisfied teachers. It is, however, posited that if not dealt with in some real way, issues of trust might serve to impede other attempts to intrude in the organizational performance of individual teachers.

Further work in this area would seem to offer considerable "payoffs" to both theoreticians and practitioners at the organizational level. Additional clarification of the meaning of the concept of "trust" will likely result in improved communication among the community of scholars and organizational practitioners for whom the term has historically been unclear and ambiguous.

References

Deutsch, M. "Trust and Suspicion." Journal of Conflict Resolution, 1958, 2, pp. 265-279.

Gibb, J. "Climate for Trust Formation." In L. P. Bradford, J. R. Gibb, and K. D. Benne (Eds.), T-Group Theory and Laboratory Method. New York: John Wiley, 1964, 279-309.

Golembiewski, R. T. Renewing Organizations. Itasca, Ill.: F. E. Peacock Publishing Co., 1973.

Sergiovanni, T. J. "Factors Which Affect Satisfaction and Dissatisfaction of Teachers." In Fred D. Carver and Thomas J. Sergiovanni (Eds.) Organizations and Human Behavior: Focus on Schools. McGraw-Hill Inc., 1969, 249-260.

Zand, D. "Trust and Managerial Effectiveness." Administrative Science and Quarterly, 1972, 17, 229-239.